

Rented Christmas The Musical

By Norman and Yvonne Ahern

Music and lyrics by
Kathryn England and Bryan Linton



 **Pioneer**
DRAMA SERVICE

Rented Christmas

The Musical

Book by Norman and Yvonne Ahern

Additional dialogue by KATHRYN ENGLAND

With music and lyrics by

KATHRYN ENGLAND, BRYAN LINTON,

IRMARAE FAIRBORNE, LINDA BOWE,

RICHARD CERCHIA and TIMOTHY CERCHIA

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For Preview Only

RENTED CHRISTMAS—THE MUSICAL

By NORMAN and YVONNE AHERN

Additional dialogue by KATHRYN ENGLAND

With music and lyrics by

KATHRYN ENGLAND, BRYAN LINTON,

IRMARAE FAIRBORNE, LINDA BOWE,

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

| | <i># of lines</i> |
|--|-------------------|
| ANNE WESTON.....attractive woman in her late 30s; owns a rent shop | 235 |
| JIMMYpart-time employee at the shop and one of the orphans helping in the “Rented Christmas”; late teens; slightly taller than John, if possible | 78 |
| DANIELLEhelper at the shop; mid-teens (can also double as one of the Whitford children) | 11 |
| JOHN DALEprominent businessman; 40s | 122 |
| BRIGGSJohn’s butler; mid-60s | 82 |
| MARTHAJohn’s housekeeper; wife of Briggs | 71 |
| JEANorphan; about 16 | 43 |
| CYNTHIA.....another; about 13 | 27 |
| WILLIE.....another; about 8 | 37 |
| LETTIE.....another; about 6 | 26 |
| MRS. ALICE LINDSEY.....matron in charge of the orphanage | 9 |
| TOM.....caroler from the orphanage and paperboy; about 14 | 2 |
| BENJAMIN WHITFORDJohn’s neighbor | 15 |
| SARAH WHITFORDhis wife | 14 |
| EXTRASas Whitford children (5), shoppers and carolers | n/a |

SETTING

There are two interior sets—the rent shop and John Dale’s home—and a bare stage to represent the main street. The rent shop can be very simple on the FORESTAGE, represented by an “L” shaped counter and an old fashioned telephone on a wall. In prominent view a sign reads, “We Rent Anything.” There might be a wheelbarrow or two along with other things to rent (tools, etc.). A door and window frame are a nice touch, but optional.

John Dale’s living room is lavishly furnished with a sofa and an armchair CENTER. There is a fireplace with a mantle UP CENTER that should be able to show when there is a fire burning in it. A couple of tables, a floor lamp and later a Christmas tree are UPSTAGE. There is a window STAGE RIGHT with no furniture directly in front of it. There are three exits: STAGE RIGHT leads to the kitchen, UP LEFT leads to the hall and upstairs, and DOWN LEFT leads outside. See page 47 for set design.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PROLOGUE

Downtown in a small city, early 1900s. Saturday, December 19, early afternoon.

ACT ONE

Scene One: The rent shop, immediately following.

Scene Two: John Dale’s living room. Monday, December 21, morning.

Scene Three: The same. Wednesday, December 23, morning.

ACT TWO

Scene One: The same. Christmas Eve, late afternoon.

Scene Two: The same. Christmas Eve, after dinner.

Scene Three: The same. Early Christmas morning.

Scene Four: The same. Christmas evening.

SEQUENCE OF MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

| | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| MC 1 | Overture | Instrumental |
| MC 2 | Almost Christmas..... | Company |
| MC 3 | We Rent Anything | Anne, Jimmy, Danielle |
| MC 4 | The Call..... | Anne |
| MC 4a | Scene Change—Sing We Now | Instrumental |
| MC 5 | When John Was Just a Boy..... | Martha, Briggs |
| MC 5a | Scene Change—Jingle Bells..... | Instrumental |
| MC 5b | The Call—Reprise | Anne |
| MC 6 | Persuasion | Anne, Children |
| MC 6a | Kids in a Hurry—Underscore | Instrumental |
| MC 7 | You Can't Rent a Christmas | Sarah, Benjamin, John |

ACT TWO

| | | |
|--------|---|-----------------------------|
| MC 7a | Entr'acte | Instrumental |
| MC 8 | Christmas is Finally Here | Martha, Briggs, Children |
| MC 8a | Scene Change—Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring | Instrumental |
| MC 9 | Could It Be?..... | John |
| MC 9a | Deck the Halls—Underscore | Instrumental |
| MC 9b | Scene Change—Hallelujah..... | Instrumental |
| MC 10 | Who Will Love Me? | John, Children |
| MC 10a | Could It Be?—Reprise | Anne, John |
| MC 10b | Christmas is Finally Here—Epilogue | Company |

RENTED CHRISTMAS—THE MUSICAL

PROLOGUE

1 MUSIC CUE 1: “Overture.”

AT RISE: It is Saturday, December 19, in the early 1900s. In the early afternoon of a downtown area of a small town, PEOPLE are bustling about shopping and running errands. GROUPS appear in various locations around the stage. (*Segue to MUSIC CUE 2: “Almost Christmas.”*)

ALL: (*Sing.*) Could it be it’s almost Christmas?
Could it be it’s finally here?

CHILDREN: (*Sing.*) We’ve been good and we’ve been waiting.
10 It’s our favorite time of the year.

ALL: (*Sing.*) Oh, the days are turning colder,
But the season’s love still burns bright.
Yes, we’re glad it’s almost Christmas,
And the holiday’s in sight!

15 **MARTHA/BRIGGS:** (*Sing.*) Could it be it’s almost Christmas?
Could it be it’s finally here?
Seeing others having Christmas
Makes it hard for us every year.
Oh, the days are turning colder,
20 But the season’s love still burns bright.
In our house there is no Christmas
And no merriment in sight.

WHITFORD FAMILY: (*Sings.*) Could it be it’s almost Christmas?
Could it be it’s finally here?

25 **WHITFORD CHILDREN:** (*Sing.*)
We’ve been good and we’ve been waiting.
It’s our favorite time of the year.

WHITFORD FAMILY: (*Sings.*) Oh, the days are turning colder,
But the season’s love still burns bright.
30 Yes, we’re glad it’s almost Christmas,
And the holiday’s in sight!

JOHN: (*Sings.*) It’s been years since I had Christmas.
Losing parents changes your life.
There’s my neighbor with his family.
35 Sometimes I wish I had a wife.
I want a tree and Christmas carols.
I want children just like his—
The warmth of children’s laughter,
Family Christmas is what I miss.

1 **ANNE:** (*ENTERS in a hurry with JIMMY. Sings.*)
I'm so glad to welcome Christmas.
It's a time when people care.
Christmas should be fun for children.

5 I wish I had more to share. (*Spoken, as she hurries to the rent shop door.*) Hello, Sarah, Benjamin! Merry Christmas, children!

WHITFORD CHILDREN: (*Speak.*) Merry Christmas!

ANNE: (*Speaks.*) Jimmy, will we be able to ready the shop on time?

JIMMY: (*Speaks.*) Sure thing, Miss Weston. I'll be back in just a few

10 minutes. (*EXITS.*)

MRS. LINDSEY: (*Sings.*) Could it be it's almost Christmas?
Such a hard time of the year
For the ones who have no parents,
No presents, no cheer.

15 **ORPHANS:** (*Sing.*) Oh, I wish I could share Christmas
With a family of my own.
I'll ask Santa for a mother,
A father, a home!

ALL: (*Sing.*) Could it be it's almost Christmas?
20 Could it be it's finally here?

ALL CHILDREN: (*Sing.*) We've been good and we've been waiting.
It's our favorite time of the year.

ALL: (*Sing.*) Oh, the days are turning colder,
But the season's love still burns bright.

25 Yes, we're glad it's almost Christmas,
And the holiday's in sight!
Yes, we're glad it's almost Christmas and the holiday's in sight!
(*MUSIC OUT. BLACKOUT.*)

End of PROLOGUE

ACT ONE

Scene One

LIGHTS UP: The rent shop. ANNE is at the counter, doing paperwork.

30 JIMMY ENTERS breathlessly with DANIELLE, and they begin working—
e.g., arranging the equipment, making notes, etc. Outside, we see
JOHN walk back and forth, reading the “We Rent Anything” sign. He
considers it carefully before ENTERING the shop.

ANNE: May I help you, sir?

35 **JOHN:** Yes, I would like to rent a Christmas. (*ANNE drops her pencil
in mild astonishment. JIMMY and DANIELLE stop their work for a
moment. JIMMY is holding something obviously heavy.*) Your sign
says you rent anything, so why not Christmas?

- 1 **ANNE:** Why not?! (*Takes out a small pad and poises her pencil ready to write. JIMMY and DANILLE return to their work.*) What kind of Christmas would you like?
- JOHN:** (*Leans slightly on the counter, tips his head back dreamily as if he were viewing a long-cherished vision.*) It's to begin the afternoon before Christmas and last until Christmas night. There must be a fully decorated Christmas tree...
- 5 **ANNE:** (*Writes.*) "...fully decorated tree."
- JOHN:** Christmas presents, Christmas carols... the works...
- 10 **ANNE:** (*Writes.*) "...Christmas presents, Christmas carols, the works..." (*As he hesitates, she acts as if she's finished.*) There. Will that be all, sir?
- JOHN:** No... we haven't gotten to the most important items. It must include five children... (*ANNE hesitates. She glances at JIMMY, who makes the gesture that indicates JOHN might be a little "touched" in the head.*)
- 15 **ANNE:** (*Continues writing.*) "Five children..."
- JOHN:** Five children... the eldest two, one boy and one girl, just home from school for the holidays...
- 20 **ANNE:** (*Writes.*) ... "home for the holidays..."
- JOHN:** ...and a wife...
- ANNE:** (*Writes.*) "A wi—!" (*For a moment she shows danger of cracking up but regains her composure without a sign of fluster to her customer. Looks up, calm.*) Then you're not married?
- 25 **JOHN:** No, I'm not married.
- ANNE:** I see. (*Speaks as she reads from her pad.*) "A tree fully decorated, presents, carols, a wife and five children." Should the younger children be girls or boys?
- JOHN:** Two girls and a boy. (*Cocks his head slightly as if contemplating further, then looks directly at her.*) That should do it.
- 30 **ANNE:** (*Continues writing as he directs.*) This will be rather expensive.
- JOHN:** I'll leave a check. (*ANNE looks up as if to receive further instructions. He writes out a check.*) You may send for more funds as you need them. Please forget expense. (*Lays the completed check on the counter.*)
- 35 **ANNE:** (*Touches the check with one hand and regards it with amazement. She talks somewhat in a dazed condition.*) I suppose you want this Christmas delivered to your home address?
- JOHN:** Certainly. Here is my card.
- 40 **ANNE:** (*Regards the card.*) John Dale! You live in the big house on Walnut Street.

- 1 **JOHN:** *(Nods.)* Across from the park.
- ANNE:** I walk by your house every morning on the way to the shop.
- JOHN:** Yes, I know. I've seen you many times... but I didn't know you worked here. *(They suddenly find themselves looking at each other in silent embarrassment. JOHN breaks the silence.)* If you have any
- 5 further questions—about the order, that is—please give me a call. *(ANNE begins to write a receipt.)* I'm at home in the evenings, but my servants will answer in the daytime. I shall advise them that you may be calling.
- 10 **ANNE:** All right. Here... let me give you a receipt. *(Hands the receipt to him.)*
- JOHN:** Thank you. *(Regards the receipt.)* Miss... Weston.
- ANNE:** *(Nods.)* Miss Anne Weston.
- JOHN:** Well, I'm pleased to meet you, Miss Weston, and I thank you.
- 15 *Again, good day. (Bows slightly as he turns to leave. As he reaches the door, ANNE promises brightly.)*
- ANNE:** One Christmas... as ordered. *(JOHN pauses briefly at that remark, turns, smiles and leaves. ANNE continues to look toward the door even after he has gone.)*
- 20 **DANIELLE:** *(Approaches the counter with JIMMY.)* Do you think he was serious? *(ANNE does not reply but continues to stare at the door where JOHN just exited.)*
- JIMMY:** *(Snaps his fingers.)* Miss Weston, do you think he was serious?
- 25 **ANNE:** *(Brought back to earth.)* Huh?
- JIMMY:** I said, "Do you think he was serious?" About the order?
- ANNE:** Oh, yes. The order! *(Looks at the pad. Her eyes widen.)* The order! Oh, Jimmy! How did I ever get into this business?
- DANIELLE:** Maybe he was just joking.
- 30 **ANNE:** No chance. *(Picks up the check.)* Look at this check. I'd say he was serious.
- JIMMY:** *(Looks over ANNE'S shoulder at the check.)* Jumping jiminy! He's serious, all right.
- DANIELLE:** *(Looks at check.)* You can say that again!
- 35 **ANNE:** *(Puts the check down and looks at her list.)* A tree, yes! Presents, yes! Carols? *(Hesitant.)* Perhaps. But a wife and children?! On Christmas?! *(Puts her hand to her head.)* Oh, my!
- DANIELLE:** Why couldn't he have wanted a wheelbarrow? We have plenty of them on hand.
- 40 **ANNE:** *(Laughs.)* I guess so with all that snow on the ground. *(MUSIC CUE 3: "We Rent Anything.")*

- 1 **ANNE/JIMMY/DANIELLE:** *(Sing.)*
We rent anything! Anything you need!
From this to that and in between,
The finest service you have seen.
- 5 We'll serve anyone! Anyone in need!
- JIMMY:** *(Sings.)* We'll find anything! Anything at all!
We'll rent you shovels in the spring...
- DANIELLE:** *(Sings.)* ...and pitchforks in the fall!
- ANNE:** *(Sings.)* If you should have a party for friends or royalty...
- 10 **DANIELLE:** *(Sings.)* Oh, it could be a formal ball...
- DANIELLE/JIMMY:** *(Sings.)*...or maybe just a tea.
- ALL:** *(Sing.)* Remember to enjoy yourself,
No need to frown or fret!
- ANNE:** *(Sings.)* Let down your hair,
15 We'll be right there!
Your needs will all be met!
- ALL:** *(Sing.)* We rent anything, just give us a try.
- ANNE:** *(Sings.)* You need a tree? Just come see me!
- JIMMY:** *(Sings.)* A new toy train or candy cane?
- 20 **DANIELLE:** *(Sings.)* You want a star? Don't travel far!
- ALL:** *(Sing.)* Just rent instead of buy! *(MUSIC OUT.)*
- ANNE:** Well, I like challenges, but I'm going to need help.
- JIMMY:** You need help?
- DANIELLE:** He's the one who needs help.
- 25 **ANNE:** What do you mean? John Dale could probably buy anything he
wanted.
- JIMMY:** No, he can't buy happiness, and I'll bet that's what he's trying
to buy.
- DANIELLE:** *(Serious.)* It's a lonely person who tries to buy happiness.
- 30 **ANNE:** *(Shakes the serious mood just created.)* I don't know if he's
lonely, Danielle. *(Looks at the check, kisses it, opens both arms with
enthusiasm.)* But I do know I'm going to try to fill his order. *(ALL get
serious again, almost gloomy.)*
- JIMMY:** He wants us to stage a play right in his own home.
- 35 **ANNE:** That's it! I'll think of it as casting a play—a play where the only
spectator is also the main character. How can you write a script
for a play like that?
- JIMMY:** You can't! *(Picks up a little positive feeling.)* The actors will
have to make it up as they go along.

1 **ANNE:** (*Catches a little enthusiasm again.*) There will be so much recognition in the play—it will be like a scene out of a Greek classic.

JIMMY: I like that! Meeting your wife and children for the first time.
5 (*Both laugh.*)

ANNE: (*Still with some enthusiasm and willing to work.*) But for now, the problems are all ours. (*Bites her pencil while she is thinking.*) Where to get the actors... and on Christmas?! Can you imagine what they would charge over at the actors' guild for Christmas Eve
10 and all day Christmas?

DANIELLE: He did said forget the expense.

ANNE: Then I'll give the actors' guild a call. (*JIMMY and DANIELLE busy themselves sweeping and straightening the shop. ANNE goes to the phone.*) Hello, Clara. Would you please give me the actors' guild?
15 (*Pause.*) Hello. Yes, I would like to hire the services of some of your professional actors. (*MUSIC CUE 4: "The Call." Sings.*)

I need some children.

Yes, I said children.

I need some small and some quite tall.

20 I need them fast!

Oh, and a mother—

They'll need a mother.

For three sisters and two brothers,

That's the cast!

25 They'll play the part of the family

At Christmas this year.

They'll have a great time as family

For a man who needs some Christmas cheer.

I'll need them Christmas.

30 Yes, all of Christmas.

From Christmas Eve

Through Christmas Day. (*Speaks.*) What?! Double pay?!

(*Sings.*) A father? We have the father.

He's the one who wants the Christmas anyway.

35 Now, you're quite sure that it can be done,

Casting this play?

I'll need them December twenty-third.

One rehearsal, and we're on our way!

My name is Weston.

40 Yes, Miss Anne Weston.

I own the rent shop.

Perhaps you've heard of me? (*Speaks.*) No?

(*Sings.*) Well, thank you for your time.

I'm sure they'll be just fine.

1 We'll make this rented Christmas just divine. (*Hangs up phone.*
MUSIC continues under dialogue.)

DANIELLE: (*Speaks.*) What did they say?

ANNE: (*Speaks.*) They said we could get anybody we wanted if we pay
5 them enough.

JIMMY: (*Speaks.*) And he said “forget expense,” so there you go.

ANNE: (*Speaks.*) I'll call his house Monday morning to see what
information I can get. Jimmy, you can take care of the shop, can't
you?

10 **JIMMY:** (*Speaks.*) Sure. (*MUSIC UP*)

ANNE: (*Sings.*) We'll make this rented Christmas just divine. (*BLACKOUT.*
MUSIC CUE 4a: “Scene Change—Sing We Now.”)

End of Scene One

ACT ONE

Scene Two

LIGHTS UP: Monday morning, December 21, the living room of JOHN'S
substantial old home. MARTHA is arranging flowers in a vase on the
15 mantle. BRIGGS is standing in the hall doorway.

BRIGGS: She said she'd be here at 9:30, and she's already five
minutes late!

MARTHA: I wish she wouldn't come. (*Disgusted.*) A rented Christmas!
What can Mr. Dale be thinking of?

20 **BRIGGS:** (*Sarcastic.*) He said “cooperate with her.”

MARTHA: She'll probably be telling me how to cook. I'm supposed to
cooperate with her? Well, there's nothing much we can do about
it. (*DOOR CHIMES RING.*)

BRIGGS: Here she is. (*Crosses to the door while MARTHA continues
25 to work with the flowers, her back to the door. BRIGGS opens the
door.*) Yes?

ANNE'S VOICE: (*From OFF LEFT.*) Hello. I'm Miss Weston. I called
earlier.

BRIGGS: (*Very cold.*) Yes. Come in, please.

30 **ANNE:** (*ENTERS DOWN LEFT.*) Are you Briggs?

BRIGGS: (*Still very cold.*) Yes. This is my wife, Martha.

ANNE: Hello, Martha. (*MARTHA turns for a brief nod of recognition,
but coldly goes back to her work.*) Did Mr. Dale tell you about his
plans?

35 **BRIGGS:** Yes. He said we should cooperate with you... in every way in
this... “rented Christmas.” (*Turns to look out window.*)

1 **ANNE:** I was hoping you could tell me something about Mr. Dale.
BRIGGS: I suppose we could.
ANNE: I need to know the type of Christmas he is used to.
BRIGGS: *(Turns to face her.)* There has been no Christmas in this
5 house for many years—ever since Mr. Dale’s parents passed away.
(Turns back to the window, hands clasped behind him.)
MARTHA: *(Without turning.)* Mr. Dale has preferred it that way.
ANNE: Oh, I see. *(Long pause.)* Have you been with Mr. Dale very
long?
10 **BRIGGS:** *(Indignant. Turns to face her once again.)* We have been with
the family for years.
MARTHA: *(Without turning, but with indignation.)* Even back in the old
town.
ANNE: The old town?
15 **MARTHA:** *(Turns slightly.)* Yes, back in Riverton. That’s where we’re
from.
ANNE: Riverton? What a pretty town! I passed through there two years
ago.
MARTHA: You did? *(Turns to face ANNE and shows momentary interest,
20 but stubbornly turns back to rearranging the flowers.)*
ANNE: Yes. I’m from Fremont myself. Have you ever been there?
BRIGGS: We don’t get up north.
ANNE: Did Mr. Dale live in Riverton?
BRIGGS: Yes, but his father’s business brought them here.
25 **ANNE:** I’d like to take some notes. Do you mind if I take off my coat?
BRIGGS: Anything you wish. Please, forgive me. *(Obligingly helps her
remove her coat and EXITS UP LEFT with it.)*
ANNE: *(Walks over to admire the flowers.)* They’re so pretty. Are they
real?
30 **MARTHA:** *(Brightens up a bit.)* Yes.
ANNE: Wherever do you get live flowers this time of year?!
MARTHA: *(Faces ANNE.)* I grow them in my room.
ANNE: Your room?
MARTHA: Yes. Flowers are my hobby.
35 **ANNE:** *(Leans over and smells the flowers.)* My mother always had a
row of potted plants in the kitchen window.
MARTHA: Briggs made me some box planters, so I have quite a
garden.
ANNE: I’d like to see it. *(BRIGGS RE-ENTERS.)*

- 1 **MARTHA:** Miss Weston said her mother had potted plants in the kitchen.
- BRIGGS:** (*Ignores MARTHA'S remark.*) Would you like to sit over here, Miss Weston? (*Points to the couch.*)
- 5 **ANNE:** (*Sits down and takes a notepad and pencil from her purse, writing occasional notes.*) I suppose you're wondering what this is all about?
- BRIGGS:** Yes, we are.
- ANNE:** (*Very warm.*) I'll let you in on a secret... so am I. (*BRIGGS and*
- 10 *MARTHA both look surprised.*) Last Saturday Mr. Dale came into my rent shop and simply said he wanted to rent a Christmas.
- BRIGGS:** Yes, we've heard.
- ANNE:** I hardly know how to fill his order.
- MARTHA:** What does he want?
- 15 **ANNE:** The part I thought would be the hardest was the easiest. He wanted a wife and five children, and I've hired them through the actors' guild. The decorations should be easy, but it still doesn't seem like much of a Christmas. I thought if I could personalize his Christmas a bit, then maybe we could get some happiness
- 20 into it.
- MARTHA:** Mr. Dale hasn't been happy at all since his parents died.
- ANNE:** (*Thinks aloud.*) Jimmy was right.
- BRIGGS:** I beg your pardon?
- ANNE:** Sorry. I was just thinking. Please tell me more.
- 25 **BRIGGS:** Mr. Dale's parents were in an accident some time ago. It was just about this time of year. His father was killed, and his mother was rendered an invalid. Mr. Dale gave her every consideration as long as she was with us.
- ANNE:** Does he have any other family?
- 30 **MARTHA:** He is an only child.
- ANNE:** (*Disappointed.*) And there's no one else around close? (*BRIGGS and MARTHA shake their heads.*) Any hobbies?
- MARTHA:** Just his work.
- BRIGGS:** (*Somewhat proud.*) He's very successful. (*Holds on to*
- 35 *"successful" as if he realizes that this is questionable.*)
- ANNE:** (*Pauses briefly.*) Tell me about his boyhood. (*MUSIC CUE 5: "When John Was Just a Boy." ANNE takes notes throughout the song.*)
- MARTHA:** (*Sings.*) When John was just a boy,
- 40 He loved to laugh and play all day.

- 1 **BRIGGS:** *(Sings.)* His world was his own holiday.
MARTHA: *(Sings.)* A happy child was he.
BRIGGS: *(Speaks.)* Quite frankly, so were we!
BOTH: *(Sing.)* A cozy little family!
- 5 **MARTHA:** *(Sings.)* My heart was filled with joy,
When John was just a boy.
BRIGGS: *(Sings.)* When John was just a lad,
His favorite books were Sherlock Holmes.
I'd take the lad through all the tomes.
- 10 We'd play the parts with joy,
When John was just a boy! *(Speaks in rhythm.)*
Ah, the mysteries we'd solve and the histories we'd make up!
From Interpol to Scotland Yard, the experts we would shake up.
(Sings.) Yes, our cleverness employ, when John was just a boy.
- 15 **MARTHA:** *(Sings.)* But Christmas was his favorite time of year.
The carols and the candy canes,
The presents 'neath the tree,
But most of all, the family.
BRIGGS: *(Sings.)* Together.
- 20 **MARTHA:** *(Sings.)* How happy we were then.
This rented Christmas can't compare.
BRIGGS: *(Sings.)* Yet all in all we still might share
A modicum of cheer, this festive time of year.
MARTHA: *(Sings.)* And find a reason to be glad...
- 25 **BRIGGS:** *(Sings.)* Like years gone by when we still had...
BOTH: *(Sing.)* ...our hearts all filled with joy,
When John was just a boy. *(MUSIC OUT.)*
MARTHA: Such pleasant memories. *(Walks to the window, gazes out.)*
- 30 **ANNE:** Does he ever go back to Riverton, to see the old house?
BRIGGS: That's the sad part, Miss Weston. When the Dales moved,
the property became part of the new high school grounds.
ANNE: Do you have a photograph of the old house? *(MARTHA and BRIGGS look at each other.)*
- 35 **BRIGGS:** No... Mr. Dale's father had a photograph taken one spring.
Don't know where it is now. *(MARTHA turns and shakes her head sadly.)*
ANNE: *(With enthusiasm.)* Do you think Mr. Dale would like a photograph,
if I could find one?
- 40 **MARTHA:** *(Leaves the window and walks toward ANNE. Incredulous.)*
Do you think you could?

- 1 **ANNE:** It's worth a try. Who took the picture?
BRIGGS: I believe it was Henry Terry. He still has a shop there.
ANNE: Maybe he kept the negative. I'll phone Riverton tomorrow.
(*Stands up.*) Oh, one other thing. I've arranged for the actors to
5 come here the morning of December 23rd for a rehearsal. I hope
that will be all right.
BRIGGS: Quite all right.
ANNE: Maybe Martha could have some cookies to help keep the little
ones interested.
- 10 **MARTHA:** I would be happy to. Uh, (*A little worried.*) what would you
like me to fix for Christmas dinner?
ANNE: (*Throws her hands up slightly.*) That's out of my department.
You're the cook.
MARTHA: (*Relieved.*) All right! How many will be coming?
- 15 **ANNE:** There will be six in addition to the family here. Three of them
will be teenagers, though, so better prepare for ten. (*ALL laugh.*)
BRIGGS: Anything else?
ANNE: (*Looks down at her notes.*) Oh... the decorations! Do you have
any?
- 20 **BRIGGS:** There are some in the basement. But I'm not sure exactly
what's there.
ANNE: I can always get some later. May I have my coat? (*BRIGGS
EXITS UP LEFT. To MARTHA.*) I really must hurry, but I'm looking
forward to seeing your flowers. Maybe after the rehearsal?
- 25 **MARTHA:** I hope so. (*BRIGGS RE-ENTERS with ANNE'S coat.*)
ANNE: (*On impulse. To MARTHA.*) Why don't you come shopping with
me? I have a lot to do for the children in the play. We're playing
Santa, you know.
MARTHA: Why, I—
- 30 **ANNE:** I could use some help.
MARTHA: Well...
BRIGGS: (*Helps ANNE on with her coat.*) Go ahead, Martha. I'll get your
coat. (*EXITS UP LEFT again.*)
MARTHA: (*Takes off her apron.*) I have my... misgivings.
- 35 **ANNE:** Whatever for?
MARTHA: (*Frowns.*) How can you buy presents for children you don't
know?
ANNE: (*Without enthusiasm.*) We'll buy for the age. It's just for the
play. (*BRIGGS RE-APPEARS with MARTHA'S coat and helps her put
40 it on.*)

1 **MARTHA:** (*Shakes her head.*) But those actor children probably have everything they need.

BRIGGS: It'll be all right, Martha... it'll be all right. Do take your time... (*Urges her toward the door as ANNE walks beside her. BLACKOUT.*)

5 **MUSIC CUE 5a:** "Scene Change—Jingle Bells.")

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE

Scene Three

LIGHTS UP: JOHN'S living room. Morning, December 23rd. The flowers on the mantle have been removed. DOOR CHIMES RING. BRIGGS ENTERS UP LEFT and opens the front door.

BRIGGS: Miss Weston, please come in!

10 **ANNE:** (*ENTERS DOWN LEFT, wearing a warm coat with a brightly flowered neck scarf. She is carrying a sack with a framed picture inside.*) I got it, Briggs!

BRIGGS: The photograph?

15 **ANNE:** (*Takes the picture from the sack and shows it to BRIGGS.*) Isn't it beautiful? It was Mr. Terry, all right, and he had the negative. It arrived this morning.

BRIGGS: (*Looks at the picture, then raises his voice and looks toward the kitchen.*) Martha, come here! You must see this!

20 **MARTHA:** (*ENTERS RIGHT wiping her hands on her apron.*) Yes? Why, good morning, Miss Weston.

ANNE: Good morning, Martha.

BRIGGS: Take a look at this photograph!

25 **MARTHA:** (*Walks over and looks at the picture.*) That's the old home, all right. Here! Let me have a look by the light. (*Takes the picture to the window and looks at it intently.*) My, those colors are lovely. (*BRIGGS and ANNE walk over by MARTHA to look at the picture again.*) Mr. Dale will certainly like this! Those lilac bushes look so real. I can almost smell them. And there's the old swing! (*Sighs and hands the picture back to ANNE.*)

30 **BRIGGS:** Imagine still having the negative after all these years.

MARTHA: I'd better get back to work. I have a lot of baking to do with all those children coming. (*Starts walking toward the kitchen.*) Five... imagine, five children!

35 **ANNE:** (*Returns picture to the sack.*) And they should be here any minute. (*Hands the sack to BRIGGS.*) There's a card in the sack, "To John, with love." Will you please wrap the picture and tuck the card in?

- 1 **BRIGGS:** Yes, and I have a surprise for you. (*Starts to EXIT UP LEFT.*)
I'll be right back. (*DOOR CHIMES RING.*)
- ANNE:** That's probably the people I'm expecting, Briggs. Is it all right if I let them in?
- 5 **BRIGGS:** Please do. (*He's OUT.*)
- ANNE:** (*Crosses to the front door and opens it.*) Jimmy! Come in! This is a surprise!
- JIMMY:** (*ENTERS DOWN LEFT.*) I've got some bad news, Miss Weston.
- 10 **ANNE:** Bad news?
- JIMMY:** I don't know what to say.
- ANNE:** What's the matter?
- JIMMY:** They called from the actors' guild.
- ANNE:** What's the matter?
- 15 **JIMMY:** The children aren't coming.
- ANNE:** Not coming?! (*Sits down on the nearest chair.*) Why?
- JIMMY:** Two of the children have the measles, and the others don't want to come by themselves. They really didn't want to miss Christmas at home, anyway.
- 20 **ANNE:** What about the mother?
- JIMMY:** That's worse yet. They hadn't found a person to play the part.
- ANNE:** They didn't even let us know! (*Clasps her hands in despair. Then she walks to the mantle where she leans her head on her hands.*)
- 25 **JIMMY:** She said she'd keep trying.
- ANNE:** (*Turns around.*) But we're out of time!
- JIMMY:** Maybe they'll come through with somebody.
- ANNE:** But even if they get a mother, whatever will we do for the children? (*Turns back to the fireplace again.*)
- 30 **JIMMY:** (*Hesitant.*) Could I play one of the parts, Miss Weston?
- ANNE:** (*Faces him quickly.*) Jimmy! Would you? Would you really want to?
- JIMMY:** Yes. I don't know if I'm a good enough actor, though.
- ANNE:** You're a very good actor. You've acted in all the plays they've put on at the orphanage, haven't you?
- 35 **JIMMY:** Yes, but—
- ANNE:** Of course you're a good enough actor. You can play the oldest boy. (*Thoughtful.*) But let's change your name to Jack. That ought to please him.

1 **JIMMY:** What do you mean?

ANNE: His name is John Dale. Jack is a nickname for John. It'll make him feel more like you're his son.

JIMMY: Suits me.

5 **ANNE:** I really appreciate your helping me out this way, Jimmy. I bet Danielle would love to help, too, but she'll be out of town with her family for the holiday.

JIMMY: It's not only to help, Anne. I'd like the chance to be in a real home with a mother and a father, even if it's just for a day.

10 **ANNE:** I understand, Jimmy.

JIMMY: *(Turns and looks out the window.)* It's just that lately all the guys at school complain about arguing with their fathers over this and that. They don't know how lucky they are to have fathers to argue with.

15 **ANNE:** I lost my father when I was 14 years old.

JIMMY: You've never mentioned that before.

ANNE: *(Shrugs her shoulders.)* I got my first job when I was 16.

JIMMY: Sixteen?

ANNE: *(Nods.)* I helped my four younger brothers through college... so
20 it's been worth it.

JIMMY: Four brothers! Any sisters?

ANNE: The youngest was a girl, but she got married as soon as she got out of high school. I was counting on using the money from this order to go visit her sometime after Christmas. But that's out
25 of the question unless they come up with a mother and we find a place to get some more children. Wait! I have an idea.

ANNE/JIMMY: *(Both light up.)* The orphanage! *(They laugh.)*

JIMMY: Talk about great minds!

ANNE: Any suggestions?

30 **JIMMY:** Jean?

ANNE: Naturally, you would suggest Jean. *(Both laugh.)*

JIMMY: She can play the part of the oldest girl.

ANNE: That should make it even more interesting for you. *(Laughs again.)*

35 **JIMMY:** Naturally!

ANNE: Who else?

JIMMY: Cynthia did a good job in the last play at the orphanage. So did Willie. That's four.

ANNE: You're a genius. They'd be perfect.

40 **JIMMY:** There's supposed to be a little girl, too, isn't there?

1 **ANNE:** Who's that cute little one who always hung around the stage
when we were rehearsing?

JIMMY: You mean Lettie?

ANNE: The one who got chocolate ice cream on the curtains!

5 **JIMMY:** Yep, that's Lettie.

ANNE: She'd be just the one.

JIMMY: How about the other children at the orphanage? We can't
leave them out.

ANNE: (*Brightens.*) They could be carolers. Mr. Dale did say he wanted
10 carols.

JIMMY: Everyone can help.

ANNE: I'd better call Mrs. Lindsey right now. (*Goes toward the
telephone.*) Make yourself comfortable, Jimmy. (*JIMMY removes his
coat and lays it on the chair, then sits down on the couch and picks
15 up a newspaper. ANNE sits on the sofa near the telephone and
picks up the receiver.*) Hello, Clara. Will you connect me with the
orphanage, please. (*Pause.*) Hello, Mrs. Lindsey? (*MUSIC CUE 5b:
"The Call—Reprise." Sings.*) I need some children.

Yes, I said children.

20 I need some small and some quite tall.

I need them fast!

It's for an order.

Yes, John Dale's order.

As Jimmy told you, only now we need the cast.

25 They'll play the part of a family for Christmas this year.

They'll have a great time as family,

And have a chance to spread some Christmas cheer.

I need them quickly.

Oh, very quickly.

30 Is there a chance that you could bring them here to me? (*Speaks.*)

Yes? (*Sings.*) Well, Jean would be just fine.

Just who we had in mind.

And Lettie will make this Christmas just divine.

We'll make this rented Christmas just divine!

35 (*Speaks.*) Thank you. We'll see you soon. Good-bye! (*MUSIC OUT.*)

JIMMY: (*Looks up from newspaper.*) That sounded like it went well.

ANNE: Yes, all except for the mother. (*BRIGGS ENTERS UP LEFT
carrying a big box, and ANNE adjusts her coat. In her distraction,
her scarf falls to the floor.*)

40 **BRIGGS:** Here's the surprise! (*Stops and looks at JIMMY.*) Where are
the others? (*Sets the box on the coffee table.*)

PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE:

Prologue: Bare stage to represent a downtown street. If space allows, we might see the rent shop, but John Dale's living room should not be revealed.

The rent shop: Old fashioned telephone, counter with papers, notepad, pencil, rent book, receipt book, telephone book. Sign that reads "We Rent Anything." Wheelbarrows, shovels, pitchforks, miscellaneous tools, broom, dustpan. Optional door and window.

John Dale's living room: Sofa, coffee table with newspapers, side table with telephone, two armchairs, flowers in a vase, lamp, bookshelf with books including a bible, fireplace with mantle.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE:

Prologue:

Shopping bags, parcels, etc. (SHOPPERS)

Scene One:

Checkbook, business card (JOHN)

Scene Two:

Purse with notepad and pen (ANNE)

Martha's coat (BRIGGS)

Scene Three:

Brightly flowered neck scarf, sack with framed picture (ANNE)

Box of ornaments and Christmas decorations including a silver star or some other special-looking tree-topper (BRIGGS)

Briefcase (JOHN)

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO:

John Dale's living room with the addition of a decorated Christmas tree with wrapped presents underneath, a basket of popcorn balls, cellophane squares.

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO:

Scene One:

Box containing nativity scene, strand of holly (BRIGGS)

Apron, tray of cookies (ANNE)

Suitcases (JIMMY)

Scene Two:

Book (JIMMY)

Wrapping paper, box containing seals, ribbon, scissors, cards, gift boxes which contain a red sweater, a bottle of perfume, slippers, a silver chain, books and bookends, a watch (ANNE)

Sled stacked with gifts, small jewelry box with brooch,
Christmas stockings, [optional] Santa suit (BRIGGS)

Tray of cookies (MARTHA)

Additional gifts including a checker set, doll house, framed
picture of an old house, picture of Jean, knitted scarves
(SAINT NICHOLAS [played by BRIGGS] or placed ONSTAGE
between Scenes Two and Three)

Scene Three:

Small package containing brooch (JOHN)

Scene Four: Coat, red hat, mittens (BRIGGS)

Envelope in purse (ANNE)

SOUND EFFECTS

Door chime

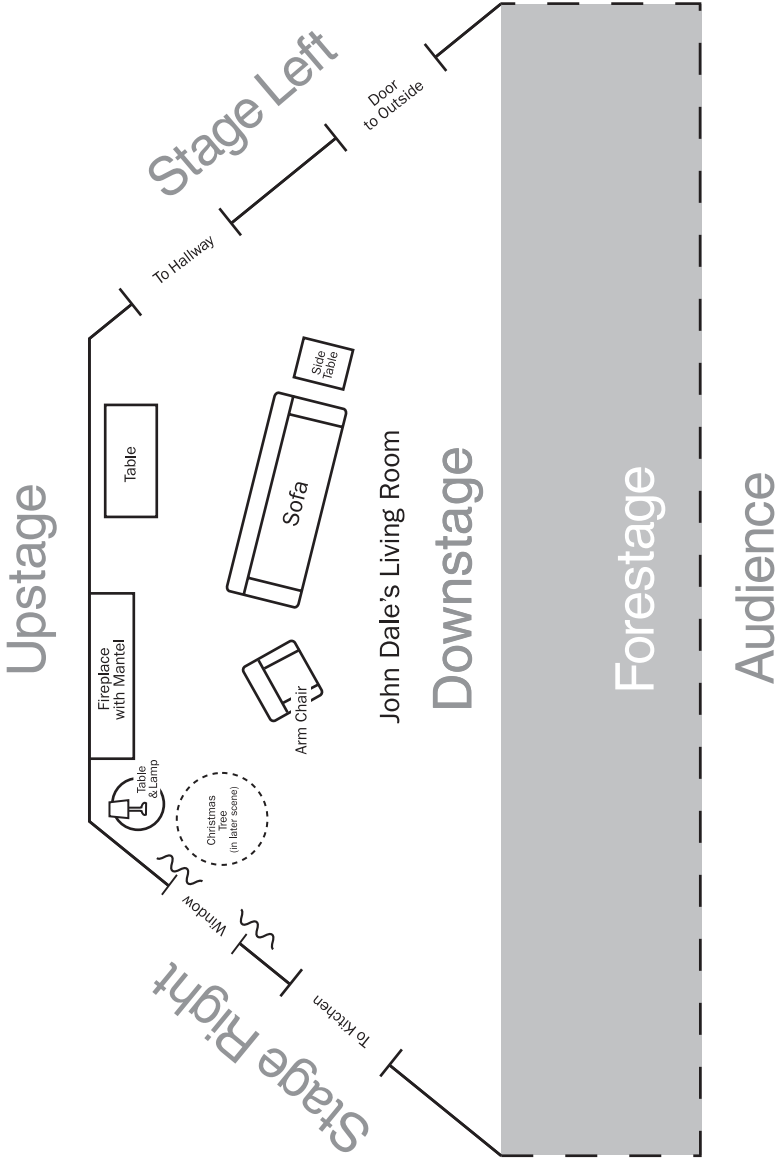
COSTUMING

The attire is of the early 1900s. ALL except BRIGGS need winter coats, scarves, etc. ANNE'S scarf is brightly flowered for ACT ONE, Scene Three. TOM'S coat is ragged. MARTHA and ANNE both need aprons. CHILDREN wear night clothes in ACT TWO, Scene Three. ANNE wears a brooch in ACT TWO, Scene Four. The CHILDREN all have new knitted scarves in ACT TWO, Scene Four.

ABOUT THE PRESENTS

The presents should be wrapped in such a way to open quickly with no cords or ribbons around the package. Ideally, boxes and their lids can be wrapped separately so the lids simply lift off. Because of the number of gifts needed under the tree, you might consider having the children who are acting in this play bring their own toys from home wrapped as Christmas presents. The presents that are essential properties of the play are a sled, a checker set, a doll house, a framed picture of an old house, a picture of Jean, two fine leather-covered books, perfume, a silver chain, slippers, two books, a brooch, a watch, books and bookends and knitted scarves for all the children.

Rented Christmas—The Musical - Set Design



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